

Inviting Students to Develop Skill and Craft In Writer's Workshop

Everyday Editing

By Jeff Anderson



Theory, Research and Practice

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Research says:

Writing Next (Graham and Perin 2007)

What does not work...

Grammar instruction in the studies reviewed involved the explicit and systematic teaching of the parts of speech and the structure of sentences. The meta-analysis found an effect for this type of instruction for students across a full range of ability, but surprisingly, this effect was negative... Such findings raise serious questions about some educators' enthusiasm for traditional grammar instruction as a focus of writing instruction for adolescents.

Writing Next: What does work....

A recent study (Fearn and Farnam 2005) found that teaching students to focus on function and practical application of grammar within the context of writing (versus teaching grammar as an independent activity) produced strong and positive effects on students' writing. Overall, the findings on grammar instruction suggest that, although teaching grammar is important, alternative procedures...are more effective than traditional approaches for improving the quality of students' writing.

Traditional Grammar (Weaver 1996)

To keep correctness in its place, some still rely on the pedagogy of the 1800s: Teach editing by correcting and memorizing. The "if-it-worked-for-me" method is often referred to as the traditional approach-a disciplining and training of the mind: teaching correct and socially prestigious forms: memorization and recitation of rules and definitions. Today we associate traditional teaching with sentence diagramming and studying the parts of speech. ...Research tells us to teach function rather than the memorize-and-diagram-and-parse-till-you-drop-method.

Editing: Defining it

Lola Schaefer:

I wish I could say that I learned to edit from the many well-executed lessons I received in grammar and high school. But honestly, all of that went in one ear and out the other. I didn't really think about editing and what it meant until I became a writer. Now I'm constantly reading published books with a critical eye, experimenting with punctuation and paragraphing and learning at the knee of an editor. For me, all learning revolves around authentic use.

April Sayre:

Says she learned to edit "primarily by wrestling with the process". She edits her writing many times before feeling it is complete. "I have to hear the language in my head and it has to feel right before I can let go of the piece." Part of editing is listening to our writing, making it feel right. It takes time.

Jeff Anderson:

Editing instruction became an editing process. Just as writing process brought joy and clarity to my students' writing, I knew an editing process had begun. All I had to see was all the good writing we shared in literature ripple through their words. When students encountered more and more beautiful text, this joy, this beauty ended up in their writing. And I knew. My students were writing under the influence - of literature, of powerful, effective, beautiful writing. Editing instruction starts with students observing how powerful texts work. What are the writers doing? What can we learn from their effectiveness-and, more often than not, their correctness? This way of editing is inquiry based, open-ended, and bound by meaning. Basic Inquiry Questions:

What do you notice?

What else?

How does it sound when we read it?

What would change if we removed this or that?

Which do you prefer? Why?

After studying brain research and learning theory, here's some basic tenets that build effective instruction. (Caine et. Al. 2004, Vygotsky 1986, Piaget and Inhelder 2000, Johnston 2004)

- Pay attention to the affective dimension of learning
- Provide opportunities for social interaction
- Post, examine, and celebrate powerful models and visuals
- Focus on patterns that connect rather than rules that correct

Start instruction by examining sentences (chunks of meaning)

But how do we find true sentences, sentences worthy of such focus? Read attentively, looking for sentences that address patterns or concepts you want students to walk away with. Choose literature that:

- Connects to students' worlds - their interests, humor or problems
- Shows a clear pattern that is easy to observe, imitate, or break down
- Models writers' craft and effective writing - powerful verbs, sensory detail or voice
- You feel passionate about and enjoy, your enthusiasm is contagious

INVITATIONS

Jeff Anderson

Grammar snobs come in two forms: amateur and pro. Amateur grammar snobs are a lot like amateur gynecologists - they're everywhere, they're all too eager to offer their services, and they're anything but gentle. - June Casagrande, *Grammar Snobs are Great Big Meanies* (2006)

Invitation to **Notice**

Invitation to **Imitate**

Invitation to **Celebrate**

Invitation to **Collect**

Invitation to **Write**

Invitation to **Revise**

Invitation to **Combine**

Invitation to **Edit**

Extending the **Invitation**

Invitation to Notice

Prompt: What do you notice?

Probing beyond "What Do You Notice?"

Craft

What's working with the text

What's effective

Where's the good writing? The Craft?

The effect?

What else?

Punctuation

What's the punctuation doing?

What effect does the punctuation have
on my reading aloud?

What changes if we remove it? Use
something else?

What is the writer accomplishing with his
or her choices?

What else?

I ask kids "What do you notice/and What else? Again and again, listening to their responses, going where they go, making sure we hit on the craft and at least one key point about the patterns in the sentence. We don't have to nor should we cover it all. The invitation to notice is a self-leveling activity in which kids notice what they notice, with slight nudges from time to time.

Invitation to Imitate

Imitation allows kids to try on authors' styles and see how they fit within their own developing style. Maybe they will find their own style or combine styles of many authors.

If children do not know how to imitate, chunk model and unlock sentence patterns with them.

- Deconstruct the sentence for its prominent features.
- Show an imitation of your own (model) or a student's (model) and connect back to the prominent features.
- Show students how to insert their ideas and experiences and still imitate the structure or pattern.

When students are invited to imitate sentences of effective writers, they learn a lot. The time we spend noticing what is strong about the model sentence pays off when kids imitate the punctuation and the writer's craft contained in the sentence.

Invitation to Imitate

**If this were a movie, I'd probably have to kill
off my father in the first scene. —Paul
Acampora, Defining Dulcie (2006)**

**If my dad were a TV star, he'd be Ward
Cleaver in Leave it to Beaver. He always had
to help you see everything about your
mistakes. At least that's how it seemed to me.
—imitation by Jeff Anderson**

Writing AAAWWUBBIS sentences

AAAWWUBBIS

AFTER

ALTHOUGH

AS

WHEN

WHILE

UNTIL

BEFORE

BECAUSE

IF

SINCE

Invitation to Imitate

If this were a rap song...
If my life were a country song...
If my like were a video game...
If this were a TV show...
If this were a comedy...
If this were a cop drama...
If this were a reality show...
If my life were a car...
If my life were a movie...
If my life were a computer...
If my life were a Target store...
If this were a basketball game...
If this were a football game...

Invitation to Celebrate

- Cultivate a festive culture
- Celebrate often, the small little victories
- Share successes, social interaction
- Be positive, operate from the positive not deficit model
- Celebrations allow for feedback

Invitation to Collect

Books about Collecting

- Donovan's Word Jar by Monalisa Degross (1994)
- The Boy Who Loved Words by Roni Schatter (2006)
- Max's Words by Kate Banks (2006)
- *Fancy Nancy*

Invitation to Write

Ways to invite kids to Write and Apply Concepts

- Imitate a powerful model
- Try a freewrite
- Revise a freewrite, adding in the new pattern
- Respond to or summarize reading
- Write an exit slip with an example of the targeted concept

Invitation to Combine

Group Sentence Criss Cross Combo

Uncombine the following from Criss Cross (Perkins 2005) to make as many sentences as possible

As if to welcome them, a half-dozen lights on tall poles flickered to life.

Because of his burden of garbage was large and precarious, he could not look down at the path and had to go by the feel of dirt under his sneakers.

If Rowanne said something important, something he needed to know he didn't want to miss it.

Combine the following sentences from Criss Cross. Try to use an ****AAAWWUBBIS** word or subordinating conjunction in your combined sentences:

He ate dinner.

Then he headed out to see Phil.

****AAAWWUBBIS** = After, Although, As, When, While, Until, Before, Because, If, Since

Phil was at his house.

Hector put on his shirt.

Hector slung the guitar over his shoulder.

The guitar belonged to him.

Hector was surprised at how well he had turned out.

Rowanne was surprised at how well he had turned out.

For comparison, the original sentences read:

After he ate dinner, he headed out to Phil's house. When Hector put on his shirt and slung his guitar over his shoulder, he and Rowanne were both surprised at how well he had turned out.

Invitation to Edit

Uncovering How Writers Communicate With Writers

How'd they do it?

When the web is finished, the spider waits for insects to fly into its web. -Seymour Simon, *Spiders* (2003)

When the web is finished, the spider waits for insects to fly into it's web.

When the web is finish, the spider waits for insects to fly into its web.

When the web is finished, the spider wait for insects to fly into its web.

When the web is finished the spider waits for insects to fly into its web.

After seeing the correct sentence, students identify what has changed as each sentence is uncovered separately. We are open to changes from sentence to sentence so that the activity continues to be generative.

Extending the Invitation

Additional ideas and activities to extend learning and promote inquiry.

Open Invitation

A Word about DOL

"A large portion of everyday editing instruction can take place in the first few minutes of class that, in the past, were reserved for single-sentence corrections on the overhead. Starting every class period with invitations to notice, combine, imitate, or celebrate is an easy way to make sure editing and writing are done every day. I want to communicate with my instruction that editing is shaping and creating writing as much as it is something that refines and polishes it. This brief opener activity that invites students inside writers' heads acts as a meaningful replacement for daily oral language (DOL) I want to step away from all the energy spent on separating editing from the writing process, shoved off at the end of it all or forgotten about altogether.

I want those boundaries muddled so that the rest of the writing and editing lessons I do, besides those start-of-class, blast-off point invitations, are mixed within mini-lessons, writing, and sharing time in writer's workshop. They aren't merely integrated: editing lessons are the fabric that holds together writing workshop. Editing is not a separate activity, but a part of writing workshop - every day. There is no one time to do any of it. I choose to kick off the class by calling kids' attention to the power of writing, then see where that takes us and the connections to writing and reading instruction." Jeff Anderson

Everyday Editing Invitations

10 Lesson Sets

1. Did You Make a List? Teaching the **Serial Comma**
2. Here it Comes: Teaching **Colons**
3. Capitalize on This: Teaching **Capitalization**
4. Possession or Contraction - You be the Judge: Teaching **Apostrophes**
5. Is It or Isn't it? Teaching **Simple Sentences**
6. To Be or Not to BE: Teaching **Verb Choice**
7. Let's Make It an Appositive Experience: Teaching **Appositives**
8. Give Me a Break: Teaching **Paragraphs**
9. Do We Have Chemistry? Teaching **Compound Sentences**
10. What's Up? Teaching **Dialogue**

An Invitation to Keep the Conversation Flowing